

CLAIMS:

We claim:

1. A cooperative spam processing system comprising:
a plurality of e-mail clients communicatively linked to one another; and,
a plurality of cooperative spam control processors, each of said processor coupled to a corresponding one of said e-mail clients, wherein said cooperative spam control processors comprises programming for detecting spam and for notifying others of said cooperative spam control processors of said spam.
2. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of peer policies, each of said policies coupled to a corresponding one of said spam control processors.
3. The system of claim 1, further comprising a centrally managed peer policy coupled to a mail server associated with each of said e-mail clients and communicatively linked to said spam control processors.
4. The system of claim 1, further comprising a group administrator for said e-mail clients, said group administrator having authority to establish an agreement to exchange spam notifications with other groups of e-mail clients having respective cooperative spam control processors.
5. A cooperative spam control method comprising the steps of:

accepting an electronic spam notification received from a peer e-mail recipient in a common computing group identifying a spam message received by said peer e-mail recipient;

storing said notification; and,

if an e-mail is subsequently received which corresponds to said identified spam message, processing said received e-mail as spam.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

determining that a received e-mail is spam; and,

communicating an electronic spam notification identifying said received e-mail determined to be spam to other peer e-mail recipients in said common computing group.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein said processing step comprises the steps of:

consulting a peer policy for said peer e-mail recipient comprising rules for handling e-mail identified as spam by said peer e-mail recipient;

heeding said notification if said rules indicate that notifications from said peer e-mail recipient are to be heeded; and,

ignoring said notification if said rules indicate that notifications from said peer e-mail recipient are to be ignored.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of overriding said notification where said e-mail message meets criteria established in said policy for overriding a spam notification.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein said consulting step comprises the step of consulting an internally managed local peer policy.

10. The method of claim 7, wherein said consulting step comprises the step of consulting a centrally managed remote peer policy.

11. The method of claim 6, further comprising the steps of:
establishing an agreement with a different computing group for exchanging spam notifications;

forwarding spam notifications from individual peer e-mail recipients in said common computing group to said different computing group;

receiving spam notifications from said different computing group; and,

storing said received spam notifications in individual peer e-mail recipients in said common computing group.

12. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program for cooperative spam control, the computer program comprising a routine set of instructions which when executed by a machine cause the machine to perform the steps of:

accepting an electronic spam notification received from a peer e-mail recipient in a common computing group identifying a spam message received by said peer e-mail recipient;

storing said notification; and,

if an e-mail is subsequently received which corresponds to said identified spam message, processing said received e-mail as spam.

13. The machine readable storage of claim 12, further comprising the steps of:
determining that a received e-mail is spam; and,
communicating an electronic spam notification identifying said received e-mail determined to be spam to other peer e-mail recipients in said common computing group.

14. The machine readable storage of claim 12, wherein said processing step comprises the steps of:

consulting a peer policy for said peer e-mail recipient comprising rules for handling e-mail identified as spam by said peer e-mail recipient;

heeding said notification if said rules indicate that notifications from said peer e-mail recipient are to be heeded; and,

ignoring said notification if said rules indicate that notifications from said peer e-mail recipient are to be ignored.

15. The machine readable storage of claim 14, further comprising the step of overriding said notification where said e-mail message meets criteria established in said policy for overriding a spam notification.

16. The machine readable storage of claim 14, wherein said consulting step comprises the step of consulting an internally managed local peer policy.

17. The machine readable storage of claim 14, wherein said consulting step comprises the step of consulting a centrally managed remote peer policy.

18. The machine readable storage of claim 13, further comprising the steps of:
establishing an agreement with a different computing group for exchanging spam notifications;

forwarding spam notifications from individual peer e-mail recipients in said common computing group to said different computing group;

receiving spam notifications from said different computing group; and,

storing said received spam notifications in individual peer e-mail recipients in said common computing group.